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WOMEN'S NETWORK GROUPS IN HAMILTON

A REPORT PREPARED FOR THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY
OF HAMILTON — STATUS OF WOMEN SUB-COMMITTEE

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SUMMARY ABSTRACT

The City of Hamilton, under the auspices of the Status of Women Sub-Committee, commissioned a study into the possible existence and formation of a women's network system. Women from all occupations and professions were contacted for interviews regarding their career resources and social connections. Three hundred and thirteen women responded to our initial questionnaire; seventy-three women were interviewed.

Our findings indicate that the need for a structured women's network exists. Many women experience isolation in their jobs and desire contacts with other women, of a social as well as business nature. Support and teamwork are necessary adjuncts to pursuing and establishing a successful career.

It is suggested that an umbrella network be instituted; under its "rubric" should emerge sub-network groups designed to address specific, specialized needs.

SUMMARY REPORT: HAMILTON STATUS OF WOMEN NETWORKING PROJECT,
SUMMER 1982

The Networking project was designed to investigate and assess the possible existence of formal and/or informal links among women in all the professions and occupations in Hamilton. The presumption of need for a project of this kind was based on knowledge of the objective situation of women in society, and particularly the work force (i.e. there is a tradition of women being slotted into low-status, low-paying, low-mobility jobs), and the understanding that the interests of women are best served through self promotion and the promotion of other women. The Status of Women holds the position that women can define for themselves what direction their lives will follow but, in order to do so, need a supportive, healthy environment where the exchange of information and ideas is unimpeded by an orientation towards masculine needs.

It was decided that women in the Hamilton area would be polled and interviewed in a probing fashion to determine the extent to which women communicate with each other on business-related issues. Three hundred and thirteen women were initially contacted with a "Basic Data" questionnaire and covering letter explaining our study and inviting their participation. The questionnaire was designed to elicit factual information regarding, among other data, occupational and career history. Our aim was to cover as many occupational and industrial strata as possible and interviewees were thus chosen on the basis of a cross-section of categories and our need to fill them (and, of course, their interest). A descriptive breakdown of our respondents illustrates that we have covered women in the fields of: journalism, law, technology, business, labour, volunteer work, social

services, politics, education, art, real estate, medicine and architecture.

The names of the original 313 women were gathered through first-hand knowledge, reference, personal friendship, professional relationship, social reputation, from resource persons in the community and publicity generated by the study. At the outset, respondents were contacted for an interview on a "first come, first served" basis, i.e. communication was made with potential interviewees as the completed "Basic Data" questionnaires arrived. We were operating with severe time constraints and needed to initiate contact promptly. As 144 women returned completed "Basic Data" questionnaires, a selection process was inevitable and our sample was pared down. The total number of interviewees was 73.

An "Interview Schedule" was developed for potential respondents and was concerned with such things as: respondents' personal career history, influential persons in their field/job, their career resources, what they perceive as the main issues confronting feminism and women in wage labour, ideas regarding networking, respondents' social, business and personal ties, and, social organizations to which they belong. The "Basic Data" questionnaire and "Interview Schedule" combine to provide information concerning formal and informal associations among women and also the possibility that social ties are indeed social and involve more than one's gender identity. For that reason questions related to such variables as religious and generational affiliation, educational experience, geographic location and national origin are included to facilitate both a quantitative and qualitative analysis. As respondents

returned their completed "Basic Data" questionnaires they were contacted on the phone, asked if they would consent to an in-depth interview and an interview time and place was established. Most of the interviews took place at the respondents' office, some were conducted at City Hall. The interviews lasted, on average, one hour. The standard "Interview Schedule" was sent to 100 women who demonstrated an interest in the study but were not interviewed. Sixteen women returned completed Schedules with what is considered to be useful information which will contribute to the study and its wider application.

Upon completion of the transcribed interviews the acquired information was coded and the data submitted to a computer analysis for easy quantification. Frequency commands (percentage distribution) and cross-tabulations (the intersection of two variables) were performed. Our sample of women is stratified; thus, generalizations to the population of women in Hamilton are not feasible. However, our findings, results and discussion are valid and specific to this research sample.

We are encouraged by our findings. Many women are familiar with the concept of "networking", issues facing women in the work world, and are supportive of the idea of initiating a network group for Hamilton women. This is evident both from the interviews (for example, 78.9% of the respondents stated that teamwork is a necessary thing amongst contemporary women) and the fact that the interviewees have been returning completed, small biographical sheets for a network mailing list. Hence, the final report (to be completed by about mid-October) will include a statistical breakdown and anecdotal analysis of our research findings.

The report will also contain recommendations regarding the creation of a network for women in Hamilton, its organization and structure, its goals and how to implement them.

Networking is the formalization of loose connections among women. It offers "short-cuts to information retrieval by means of colleagues who know what material is important and where it can be found" (Wilson). The "formalization of loose connections" among women must be done with foresight, skill and an awareness of what women want. Our study provides that information, we thus await the opportunity to activate a Women's Network based on shared understanding, information and common goals.

References: Jane Wilson, "Networks", Savvy

Acknowledgements

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The Corporation of the City of Hamilton, notably the City Clerk's Office, and the Summer Canada Program are acknowledged for their financial backing and other forms of tangible support.

Finally, many thanks are extended to the hundreds of women, and three men, who participated in the study. Their willingness and enthusiasm were most encouraging.

Introduction

The following is a report of the findings of the Hamilton Status of Women Networking Project, conducted during the summer of 1982. It represents the culmination of interviews and information gathered to assess key female positions in major corporate, political, professional and service industries in the Hamilton area; the study was also designed to investigate the career patterns, social connections, organizational and support network ties of the interviewees. Specifically, the focus was intended to trace both their formal and informal links with other women and organizations in the community to determine if a women's support network exists in Hamilton.

The first section addresses the idea and practice of social networking. The second outlines the methodology of the study. An anecdotal discussion follows: it contains a summary of excerpts of the interviews. A final section includes some suggestions and guidelines regarding the institution of a social women's network.

WHY NETWORKING?

A "network" can be: "...a set of links among individuals or groups" (Fischer, 1977); "...a new arrangement of parallel wires" among women who want to get something done (Kleiman); "...a collection of acquaintances that managers can count on for some kind of help (Morrison, 1981); a group "where women can meet, learn from and help one another" (Working Woman, 1980); a team whose purpose is to "provide support, information and business opportunities to its membership" (Wilson); "...a set of persons who can get in touch with each other" (Mitchell, 1969:3); or, a natural support system to counteract the effect of stressful situations (Warren, 1981). For our purposes, "networking" refers to the time honoured use of alliances, contacts and referrals to forward one's career. It is sharing, exchanging ideas, obtaining feedback, referrals, information and guidance on any modern issue or job related problem concerning women. It is our aim to establish a women's umbrella network with its own system of sub-networks. Its vision thus might include a spin-off of a variety of business, social and self-help groups.

The phenomenon of networking is new only insofar as the application of its label is concerned. The "old boys' network" is alive and well, firmly entrenched and successful in its subtlety. The Hamilton Club, not branded as a forum for networking, is a social club, exclusive to men, is a place where business gets done and contacts, alliances and contracts are made - among men. The same takes place on the golf course as it does at the urinals. Three male "informants" all testified to the existence and efficacy of a men's network, particularly their own. One proclaimed it to be "damn good"; another said he wasn't sure if an "old boys' network" existed and what exactly was it. After

listening to my explanation he said, "You're talking about the 'buddy system'; I know what you're talking about. I know who to call." "Knowing who to call" presupposes a certain visibility on the part of colleagues, contacts and the "who" to call. This is one aspect of a network's subtlety. A sex-map of the work world illustrates that women are disproportionately slotted into occupations and industries which have acquired a "female" tag. The characteristics of a work force stratified along sex lines are, among other things, its slotting of women into dead-end positions, numerically dominated by women but, managed by a male elite (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978). The phenomenon of male bonding is familiar to most of us as mythology: human arrangements, i.e. the propensity for men to group, and "bond", is biologically transmitted rather than social fact: so it goes. While the origin of this phenomenon of the exclusion of women from the public sphere, and indeed the history of the oppression of women, can be, and is, debated (in many arenas), the reality of "men in groups" is obstinate and slow to change. Men know power in both the domestic and social spheres. Their identities are constantly reinforced through the promotion of their interests and a work force that is modelled along masculine lines. Many men (indeed all social actors) are nervous at the prospect of change regardless of the innovation or whether the change will contradict or upset their balance of power: old habits die hard. In order to transcend structural barriers which prohibit mobility, women must promote the interests of themselves and other women. Network ties are formed often based on an exchange of resources and "costs and rewards" thought to be available to the participants (Fischer, 1977; March, 1982:87). Individuals in an exchange system must feel they have self skills to exchange. Herein lies one aspect of the

insidiousness of networking as it applies to women. Self-esteem, traditionally the monopoly of men, is something women must consciously and effectively develop. To network productively men feel they have something to offer; they know, however, that free advice isn't really free. Women must learn to barter but also to be comfortable asking and "using".

It can be argued that the links in individuals' social environment are of their own design; they are more often bounded, however, by the lack of knowledge of alternatives, in this case the low visibility of women or women's clubs which are feminist in orientation. According to Stern: "The fraternity of man is a venerable, established club; the members know the rules" (1980:7). Men expect to be in careers for life and thus know favours will be returned and their debts will come due. Women's networks are highly conscious but necessary and are propelled by the implicit understanding that success in the work place is a process which involves tapping the market before the job search. Networks eliminate the isolation women experience, offer support in an often alien work situation and encourage women to extend and achieve their goals in a world where kudos is offered repeatedly to male accomplishments - often regardless of the quality. The phenomenon of women working twice as hard as men to get equal recognition is acknowledged by respondents:

A woman has to be so much better than a man to get the same recognition that a man not as capable would get. I think to achieve the most I probably have to achieve better than a male because I'm female.

A women's network offers women from all strata, occupations and interest groups: the identification of other women in their field; communication, support and encouragement; the promotion of self and group interests.

Women of all ages and occupations meet at organized

functions to: initiate a contact; find a mentor or become a mentor; better understand the modern business "system"; or, initiate an activist's lobby around a particular issue with women who have similar concerns. The units of exchange in a network are information, services, support and access (Morrison, 1981:1). According to Morrison: "developing and using business contacts is a legitimate management skill...The challenge is not simply to develop contacts, but to develop useful contacts and use them" (1981:3).

A network is the formalization of loose connections among women. One high-profile respondent said:

All you have to do is make five phone calls and you've got a network. If you know what people to call.

Do women in Hamilton know who to call - i.e. how to network? The following section is divided into segments which supply the most comprehensive answer to the question.

METHODOLOGY

Three hundred and thirteen women were initially contacted with a covering letter explaining our study and inviting their participation, and the "Basic Data" questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to elicit factual information regarding, among other data, occupational and career history. Our aim was to cover as many occupational and industrial strata as possible and interviewees were thus chosen on the basis of a cross-section of categories and our need to fill them. A descriptive breakdown of our respondents illustrates that we have covered women in the fields of: journalism, law, technology, business, labour, volunteer work, social service, politics, education, art, real estate, medicine and architecture.

The names of the original 313 women were gathered through first hand knowledge, reference, personal friendship, professional relationship, social reputation, from resource persons in the community and publicity generated by the study. At the outset, respondents were contacted for an interview on a "first come, first served" basis, i.e. communication was made with potential interviewees as the completed "Basic Data" questionnaires arrived. We were operating with severe time constraints and needed to initiate contact promptly. As 144 women returned completed "Basic Data" questionnaires, a selection process was inevitable and our sample was pared down. The total number of interviewees was 73.¹

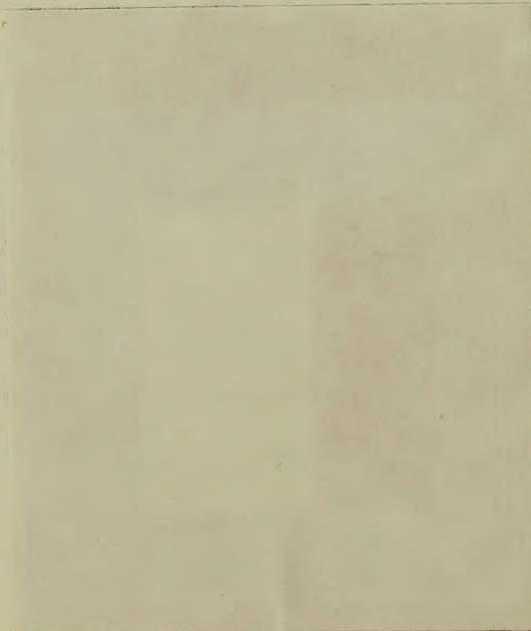
1. Only 71 interviews were completed and transcribed by the time we were ready to program the data for a computer analysis. Hence the total number of respondents for each computer run was 71; the two other interviews, to make a total of 73, are included, however, in the general discussion.

An "Interview Schedule" was developed for potential interviewees and was concerned with such things as: respondents' personal career history; influential persons in their field/job; their career resources; what they perceive as the main issues confronting feminism and women in wage labour; ideas regarding networking; respondents' social, business and personal ties; and, social organizations to which they belong. The "Basic Data" questionnaire and "Interview Schedule" combine to provide information concerning formal and informal associations among women and also the possibility that social ties are indeed social and involve more than one's gender identity. For that reason questions related to such variables as religious and generational affiliation, educational experience, geographic location and national origin are included to facilitate both a quantitative and qualitative analysis.¹

As respondents returned their completed "Basic Data" questionnaire they were contacted on the phone, asked if they would consent to an in-depth interview and an interview time and place was established. Most of the interviews took place at the respondents' office; some were conducted at City Hall. The interviews lasted, on average, one hour. The standard "Interview Schedule" was sent to 100 women who demonstrated an interest in the study but were not interviewed. Sixteen women returned completed schedules with what is considered to be useful information which will contribute to the study and its wider application.

1. As a "validity check", i.e. in this case, to determine the possibility of sex-biased response, three high-profile men were interviewed by the author. Allusion to their contributions will be highlighted throughout the report, when appropriate and/or applicable.

Upon completion of the transcribed interviews the acquired information was coded and the data submitted to a computer analysis for easy quantification. Frequency commands (percentage distribution) and crosstabulations (the intersection of two variables) were performed. Our sample of women is stratified; thus, generalizations to the population of women in Hamilton are not feasible. However, our findings, results and discussion are valid and specific to this research sample.



FINDINGS/DISCUSSION

I can't decide whether or not to join (the local professional organization/club); I can always drink at home.

The Professional Association presents seminars and workshops which may be helpful but then I've never gone to one of those meetings before.

The above two quotes are expressions in the extreme of the prevalent mood amongst the women interviewed in the Networking Project. Most of the women were smitten by the idea of an informal communication system among women and especially among co-workers, colleagues and women of similar interests. However, the two salient (and representative) quotes betray the reality of women's experience, i.e. how they order their lives, rather than the ideas they may have regarding a certain concept or practice. For example, 62 of our 73 respondents said they were ambitious; a statistical breakdown indicates that the largest percentage of this group (43.3%) are ambitious in the way they set goals for themselves; the implication is that these women can clearly define what they want. The importance of networking is the crucial factor in realizing those goals. While 78.9% of our sample feel that team-work is necessary among women in a male dominated profession, only 38% indicated that it was important to belong to an organization (i.e. to make social or business contacts). It appears that women are in accord with the concept of networking and appreciate its effects yet lack some important knowledge of what a network can do, i.e. how it works, how to give and take in a way compatible with "femininity" and how to recognize their own power and use it. Contradictory responses, similar to the one above, are elucidated in the following sub-sections.

NETWORKING

As was mentioned, many women are familiar with informal networking in that they have a repertoire of names upon which to call when in need. Fifty two percent of the respondents rely on colleagues. However, 60.6% of the sample have colleagues who are male and only 16.9% see their female colleagues twice a week or more. The point is subtlety argued that one can not always rely on men to know and/or have women's best interests in mind. On the other hand, women must know how to manipulate their contacts and understand the system within which they are operating. An appreciation of how the "system" operates to the disadvantage of women's interests is helpful.

Sometimes we put up our own barriers...I know men can feel terribly threatened to feel women are going to team up to get there. So I would team up with both men and women to get there. Men don't like that.

I think women who don't get ahead don't do so because they don't develop contacts with men and women...they tend to go to work, rush home... where men in the same situation don't feel that need to be a father in the same sense - have time to go to dinner meetings and join organizations in order to develop their business contacts which they use to further their career. Because of the home pressures that a woman has, even without children, their husbands still expect them to cook supper and do laundry and so on. These are all jobs that are traditionally done by women. And the women tend to go home and do that then spend time developing their career.

The apparent contradictions aren't unresolvable. The latter respondent, in particular, begins by blaming women for their "lot" but then points, in a cogent way, to the obvious structural barriers to women's advancement in the paid work world. It is hoped that with greater and pronounced exposure to, and practice of, network groups, women will begin to realize that networking is a consolidation of women's interests not a denial of men's.

There was an acceptance of the notion among other respondents:

...professional women who are successful tend not to recognize the potential network involvement or if they do it they do it in a very circumscribed circle and as a result, their personal success tends to deny the struggle that exists between men and women.

I think you should get to know your colleagues and if you're having any problems in a certain aspect, it's good to have someone to call... In terms of networking you find out what's going on at the competition which is certainly interesting and helpful.

...team work as a loose liason between women... has been useful because many (clients) have been referred to me by other women...

In this sort of work you are recognized by your abilities, not so much as "who you know" but then it doesn't hurt either to get to know the Managing Editor or the Chief Editor...

TEAM WORK

The responses to the questions on team work were on the whole positive with most of the interviewees recognizing that supportive associations among women are vital to the promotion of women's interests.

Women should reach other women, talk and listen, create a strong linkage.

I don't think women should assume that they're alone. They should be supporting one another when they can...just being able to share common problems with one another especially when its something that can't be discussed with men.

I think women have to help themselves and each other...women are so supportive and so sensitive.

...it is necessary. I think women should help each other. Women's galleries and organizations are a big help. They have given me the opportunity to show my art and to meet other artists.

(Team work is necessary) in terms of exchanging ideas, help (to) share experiences, as reference points.

I think team work is necessary. A well organized centre which listed women in different professions would be a useful resource.

It is essential. One of the problems facing women in the professions is they lack the kind of networking and co-operation that we see among men. Women don't appear to meet over business luncheons the way men traditionally have at which alot of important decisions are made.

(It should work) formally and informally. If you're working on a project you have to get together as a group and set down exactly what your goals are and what you want to do and how you want to get there and figure out who the best people are to do that. You have to get organized, work it out logically and you have to work as a team and support each other.

One woman commented that team work should operate formally with the inclusion of men. The fact that men have not chosen to include women, in the past, throws her suggestion into question and renders it somewhat tenuous.

The preceding quotes speak for themselves. Statistically, and in practice, however, another picture emerges. 69% of the sample replied that team work should operate essentially through support and encouragement. On the other hand, only 32.4% replied that team work would have helped them in their careers. 69% of the women have joined organizations since entering their occupations but 72% of these said that organizations have helped them gain social contacts - only 10% used organizations for career contacts. Similarly, only 52.1% of the sample attends local women's conferences and seminars; it can be argued that women haven't had practice at networking, no doubt because, in part, of the absence of network models. The remedy it seems, would be to establish an operative network, of women, by women, such that their visibility is promoted and enhanced.¹ There were some women who expressed negative feelings and comments regarding networking and how it should operate. Clearly, these women have the option of not becoming involved in network activities.

It (team work) should develop very informally to be effective. If it's formal it's threatening, and if it's social it will become a bitch session.

1. It is interesting to note that most of the women interviewees were reluctant to divulge the names of their business and personal contacts, as though this was "unprofessional" or would in some way tarnish their reputations. The male respondents were, on the other hand, generous with this information. This could mean they understand that they know how to be "upfront" about the legitimate business process of give and take, of reciprocation. It was clear from the interviews they have an appreciation of self promotion, a reliance on their abilities and on the abilities of others. It could also mean, however, that their positions are so entrenched that retaliation is impossible or would not hurt them.

I'm a believer in team work. It's very important. I don't think women should form a team that is in opposition to the male world. It only leads to hostility.

(Team work) is necessary as long as it doesn't turn into a mafia. Women shouldn't gang up on men. This will lead to resentment...But women should offer each other support, share ideas, share respect, share problems.

If you think sticking together is going to get you ahead, it won't.

I think it's desirable but I don't think it's possible. Two women can work together, but an all women's committee group won't be able to agree. We don't pull together like men do.

The denial placed on the power of women is puzzling especially in light of their own achievements. The negation of the strength of women's collective "work" also denies the extraordinarily beneficial impact of the women's movement on the status of their lives and the infusion of feminist philosophy into mainstream culture. The reluctance to see women as allies reflects a competitive spirit which, while necessary in terms of self competition, and the establishing of personal challenges and goals, is something women might want to redefine in order to create a workplace modelled around "sharing" paradigms or co-operative structures. It is true that women as a class are amorphous; the definition of common interests, however, is easily attainable and desirable.

The following sums it up:

If we're going to be fighting for your rights, you can't do that individually.

FEMINISM

The responses regarding the issue of feminism and the women's movement, and its relation to work-related concerns were perhaps the most contentious but, it can be argued, reflect the diversities within feminist thought itself. It should also be stated at the outset that popular definition of feminism and its fashionable depiction is loosely defined for most and gleaned from the mass media - run by men and promoting sensationalism or "what will sell". Many women are feminist "by conduct", i.e. they challenge sex-role stereotyping in their own lives and are aware of the concerns of equal pay for work of equal value, day care, sexual harassment, etc., yet will not commit themselves to the label which, in popular consciousness, is ill-defined. It can be argued, however, that it is incumbent upon aware women to become conversant with issues and terminology which can ultimately affect their lives in a positive way. The ghetto of ignorance only serves to isolate women and dilute their efforts and, in the final analysis, leave the power of definition, and hence action, to men.

59% of the sample identified themselves as feminists. The definition of the term which gathered the highest response rate (28.2%) was "women concerned with social issues affecting women"; 26% preferred the label "radical". Of those women who reject the association with feminism, 78% resort to the label "radical" while 46.3% defined the term as "women concerned with social issues affecting women" and 39% as equated with "humanism". Clearly the association is made, erroneously it is argued, between the concept "feminism" and insurgent activities. The bulk of feminist work, however, takes place within the arena of gradual social change which will affect the quality of life of all, i.e. involves the enunciation, at the political, economic, cultural and sexual levels, of the full participation of women in social life as women define it.

The following quotes reflect a conservatism which, by definition, impedes progress for half the human race, humans who confront sexism, daily, in its minutia and in its broader structural implications.

It's always been my feeling that a woman is only as oppressed as she allows herself to be...I think you're seeing more and more women going into upper management. I'm sure they're only limited by their own set boundaries.

(A feminist is) a radical...she has the attitude women first, everybody else second. A feminist confronts anti-feminists and tries to change his mind. This is negative because it leads to hostility...I do believe in equal rights for women.

A feminist is a woman who goes to extremes such as burning bras, etc.

I consider myself an independent liberated woman...(a feminist is) a militant woman.

To some degree we are the authors of our own misfortune. We fail to grasp opportunities for advancement, decline responsibility and often nit-pick when it comes to making decisions. I may be a maverick, but I don't feel that men and women really think alike. I would like to see us concentrate on the areas we really do well and forget about the chest thumping and moaning about being down trodden. Probably birth control and the world wide recession will do more for equalizing the work opportunities for women than the feminist movement.

Perhaps the most puzzling responses and points of view come from women who will not identify themselves as feminists yet support the beliefs and actions of the "women's movement". For example:

The movement as such has certainly improved society's appreciation and awareness of the potential of working women, also, the contributions they have given have started to become recognized...(a feminist is) someone that I'm not...someone who is a female and who has lost her perspective on society as a whole.

I object strenuously to those who are strident and abrasive...(I don't consider myself a feminist)...I just think women should have every right to everything just as any man.

I think the women's movement has helped in every area...In terms of my profession... (it) has helped women artists gain recognition...I'm for equal rights for women but I wouldn't classify that as being a feminist. I see a feminist as going overboard.

It appears that some women will not commit themselves to the "feminist" label; while it is true that labels are theoretically incomplete, it is argued that people who avoid labels do so to avoid the behavioural and attitudinal responsibilities that accrue to a label. However, it is a political world; one has to make choices. Taking a position or making a choice implies that one is ready to act. If "feminist" is assumed by only a few actors, women once again are divided (as the term is left to be (ill) defined by a larger, vocal group, the media) and a few do the dirty work for the rest - but with few rewards. We cannot forget that it is due, largely, to the struggles of the women's movement that opportunities for women are opening. Varieties of feminism are immense but at root is a shared understanding that women are treated as second class citizens. Feminism involves the recognition of female oppression in its myriad of forms and also involves the struggle for self-determination, personally and politically. The following voices speak to feminist philosophy in eloquent terms; if the voices were to converge, the effect would be powerful.

Feminism as social change is not about women getting what men have got...at root is an equality component but not a component where men have gotten into...boxes.

(I am) interested in the interests of women... (feminism) is a unifying thread that is pulling women together to share some resources and some ideas...

Women have lagged behind for too long -
I will always be grateful for the work
the women's movement has done for all
women.

The women's movement has made us all very
aware of where we stand in relation to men,
how we have been treated historically,
and what avenues we could or should choose
to improve our lot. Conversely, it has
brought women out of the broom closet and
by focussing world attention on the
external problems has drawn public ire
from well meaning but negatively oriented
persons who cannot stand changes in the
status quo.

A feminist is a woman who has real concerns
about the role that other women have in their
common destiny, who has genuine feelings of
sisterhood and a desire to improve the lot
of women, to speak out against our related
injustices and to be counted...I am a woman
who is proud of the achievements and fortitude
of all those persons who earn their sainthood
in the home and office.

I believe a woman is a person. I don't think
that she is an appendage of a man...I think
it is to the advantage of men to recognize
women as persons.

(Feminism is) the belief that...women should
be allowed in society, in their homes and in
their work place to develop their own potential
and their own feeling of self worth and their
own special and unique qualities as much as men.
(Those special and unique qualities are)
emotionality, insights, perceptiveness about
people, softness...women tend to operate from
their...feelings...I think that's a positive
quality. It can be and should be encouraged
and used in a positive way...a certain feeling
for children...which men have but women have
in a different capacity...using it as a benefit
to society.

DISCUSSION/GUIDELINES

The formation of a women's network in Hamilton will require the conscious organizing of women around self-defined and/or self-motivated interests. Many women in the study spoke of having access to, or of having created an informal system whereby names were available "for the calling". These, for the most part, were connections within a respondent's office or directly within the organization or profession. While these incipient connections are not to be eschewed, they do not take the woman in question beyond her own occupation nor do they promote visibility. Networking takes place in - and out of - the office and involves the ongoing process of maintaining a high profile.* It also involves not simply a linear set of connections but an active practice. The modern business system rests on the assumption that one asks and will be asked in return. Women's reluctance to take themselves seriously and discuss business openly must be overcome. This implies the confidence to sell oneself: a good place to start is with a receptive, supportive cohort. The following are suggested outlines/guidelines for the establishment of a women's network as a professional support system.** According to Kleiman, the key to networking success is the specification of narrow interests. Networks help you identify women in your field and get in touch with other women.***

* One respondent from our admittedly small and perhaps unrepresentative male sample told me that he undertook responsibilities in the organizations to which he belongs to increase his visibility "people know my name" - which in turn helps his business. Another pointed to the Hamilton Club, an exclusively male domain, as a place where business (networking) gets done.

** There are possibilities for intra-corporate networking; these will not be dealt with here as they are often susceptible to personnel and management policies already in existence within the company.

*** The following are gleaned from interviews, circulated knowledge and/or Kleiman and Welch (1980).

WHAT KIND OF NETWORKS

There are two aspects to networking: self and group interest. Such a general formulation allows for the emergence of sub-networks, under an umbrella formation, which arise from specialized needs. It is acknowledged that networking doesn't work just with friends; a network group needs objective interests to define and guide it. Some possible sub-network groups might be organized around:

A displaced women's group: for farm women, women in rural areas, ethnic and minority women, older women, battered women, displaced homemakers.

Health and Sports: organized around pleasure/fitness activities or to promote self-help therapies.

Politics: involving grass-roots networking and lobbying.

Labour: a coalition of women in trade unions, for example, the organizations of boycotts and networks for household workers.

Art: organizing around the showing of local women's art work and lobbying to bring women's shows to local galleries/museums.

SETTING UP A NETWORK

1. Need determines size; content determines form. A network can address the following problem: the underutilization of women's skills and abilities; and needs: finding women for highly specialized jobs; sharing information regarding career opportunities; an environment for making contacts; acquaintance with role models and mentors; advice and information regarding the maintenance of dual roles of business woman/homemaker; the flow of information concerning corporate policies, procedures and educational programmes.
2. The common element to networking is a shared commitment to helping women. However, individuals will have to decide between a group (or groups) of similar interests or diversity.
3. Selection: Whether self selection or by invitation, membership in a women's network is for women who are able to do something for each other.
4. Contacts: phone calls or mimeod letters to prospective or veteran members are essential to maintaining continuity and spirit.
5. Getting people to attend: Feature speakers, workshops, seminars and group discussions. Offer door prizes, eg. printed-to-order business cards, computerized financial planners, annual membership in organizations or magazine subscriptions. Phone members on the day of the meeting.
6. Where, when and how often: Once a month seems to be commonly preferred and in clubs or restaurants. Time and place, however, depend on the needs and resources of the group.
7. Dues, Officers, By-Laws and Programmes: These procedures are to be determined, again, by the demands of the group, its personnel and orientation. People don't mind paying for services if they get something in return. If the group cannot afford paid staff, a telephone answering service may be the answer. Finally, with regard to programmes, members will most likely want to get down to the business of the day: the goal of networking is to be able to solve all problems with three phone calls.

8. Newsletters/Directories: An effective way to stay in touch between meetings, and for future reference, is through the use of a membership and mailing list and newsletter outlining past and upcoming events.

CONCLUSION

The preceding illustrates, we believe, that there is much fertile ground from which a women's network can emerge. The interest is there; the direction is not. Most women in the study, by virtue of their success, are feminists by conduct: i.e. they have goals independent of popular notions of what a "woman's place" is. The bringing of women together to coalesce around certain collective goals is a harder thing to achieve. Network groups, however, work toward that purpose. They offer "short-cuts to information retrieval by means of colleagues who know what material is important and where it can be found" (Wilson). An umbrella network might begin by drawing upon the personnel of existing women's social and business-oriented groups, e.g. Zonta and the Junior League. It must have its own structure, however, to define and defend its objectives of the formalization of loose connections among women, the sharing of information, business opportunities and support.

APPENDIX I

GENERAL AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS:

<u>Place of Birth:</u>	Hamilton	33.8%
	other	59.2

<u>Age:</u>	20-30	22.5%
	31-40	29.6
	41-50	19.7
	51-60	16.9
	61-	4.2

<u>Marital Status:</u>	Single	11.3%
	Married	49.3
	Sep/Div	25.4
	Widowed	8.5

Formal Education:

Graduated College or University	23.9%
Completed post-graduate or professional school	21.1
Some post-graduate or professional school	18.3
Some College or University	15.5

<u>Occupation:</u>	Social Services	15.5%
	Business	12.7
	Education	9.9
	Arts	9.9
	Medicine	8.5
	Self-employed	8.5
	Journalism/media	8.5

APPENDIX II

Do you consider yourself a feminist?

Yes	59.2%
No	36.6
Valid Cases	71
Missing Cases	0

Is team-work necessary for women?

Yes	78.9%
No	9.9
Don't know	9.9
Valid Cases	71
Missing Cases	0

How has team work helped you?

Sense of direction	33.3%
Contacts	33.3
Helped others get ahead	25.0
Business referrals	4.2
Valid Cases	24
Missing Cases	47

How should team-work work?

Support and encouragement	69.5%
Should work with men	15.3
Out reach to women	13.6
Other	1.7
Valid Cases	59
Missing Cases	12

People or organization necessary to get ahead in job.

Educational institution	14.3%
Training programme	9.5
Individual	14.3
Voluntary organization	33.3
Develop good reputation	19.0
Professional Association	9.5
Valid Cases	42
Missing Cases	29

Is it important to belong to organizations? If yes, why?

Meet people in profession	73.9%
Contacts	20.3
P.R.	2.9
Valid Cases	69
Missing Cases	2

How has membership in organizations helped you?

Business contacts	21.6%
Job Experience	18.9
Social Status	56.8
Met friends there	2.7
Valid Cases	37
Missing Cases	34

How has membership in organizations, joined since entering occupation, helped you?

Career contacts	10.0%
Social contacts	72.0
Social reputation	8.0
Kept up to date on developments in profession	2.0
Met friends there	8.0
Valid	50
Missing Cases	21

Do you consider yourself ambitious?

Yes	83.1%
No	15.5
Valid Cases	71
Missing Cases	0

In what ways are you ambitious?

Have goals	43.3%
Have achieved what I want	25.0
Take risks	1.7
Industrious	20.0
Plan to continue my education	6.7
Want to win	3.3
Valid cases	60
Missing Cases	11

Social ties with men: business or social?

Business	35.3%
Social	23.5
Both	41.2
Valid Cases	68
Missing Cases	3

Social ties with women: business or social?

Business	21.1%
Social	45.1
Both	33.8
Valid Cases	71
Missing Cases	0

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